

## TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO†

### EXCERPTS FROM OUR STATE MEDICAL JOURNAL

Vol. XI, No. 11, November, 1913

*From Some Editorial Notes:*

*Of Utmost Importance!*—For your own benefit and protection, please remember these facts:

The large majority of suits for damages for alleged malpractice which we are called upon to defend, are based upon an alleged improper treatment of a fracture.

In every case of fracture that comes to you for professional treatment, see that an x-ray plate is made and that you keep it in your possession; do not give it to the patient.

Whenever possible, have some other physician see the patient with you, make a careful examination of the fracture, and be able to testify that it was properly set and bandaged.

Use the fluoroscope if you like, but, in addition, be sure to have a plate made; it will remain a permanent record of the condition at the time it was taken.

In two instances where suits were brought, the member had thoughtlessly given the x-ray plates to the patient and, of course, the patient would not produce them; they were "lost."

In 1896, Doctor Jones gave a demonstration of the then very new x-ray or roentgen rays before the San Francisco County Medical Society. In the course of his remarks he expressed the opinion that the time would come when any physician who treated a fracture case without making an x-ray examination of it would render himself liable to a suit of damages. Many of those present ridiculed this opinion and one went so far as to deplore the discovery of the x-rays, saying that they would make surgeons less careful and less skilful. Carelessness in this regard—not taking and keeping an x-ray plate—has cost the Society \$4,000 in the defense of suits which came about more or less as predicted.

To put it graphically, this carelessness has cost each individual member almost two dollars, for the money for defense comes out of our pockets; the more the work costs the Society, the higher is the required assessment.

Have an x-ray plate made in every case of fracture.

Keep the plate—do not give to the patient.

Have a consultant if possible.

These things are for your own protection, and a little care and thought may keep you from a great deal of trouble and loss of time and annoyance in the future. . . .

*Where Does the "Physician" Come In?*—It is a well-recognized fact that the profession of medicine is a most unselfish one. Medical men are continually striving along lines of prophylaxis, with results which have already greatly impaired the income of the profession as a whole. And now, assisted by various hospital organizations and laboratories, the public may soon be taught to get along almost entirely without the services of so-called diagnosticians and therapeutists. In these days of self-starting automobiles, pianolas, victrolas, of blood transfusions and tissue transplantations, self-administered anesthetics and self-performed operations, it is rather gratifying to stop and consider the advances made by the laboratory worker along the lines of diagnosis, thus enabling the patient to decide accurately for himself as to what ails him. . . .

*Uniform Membership.*—When medical societies were few in number and small in membership and had no direct rela-

(Continued in Front Advertising Section, Page 15)

† This column strives to mirror the work and aims of colleagues who bore the brunt of Association activities some twenty-five years ago. It is hoped that such presentation will be of interest to both old and new members.

## BOARD OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA†

By CHARLES B. PINKHAM, M.D.  
Secretary-Treasurer

### News Items

"The State Board of Medical Examiners announces that 172 of 174 applicants had passed the examination for physicians and surgeons recently held in San Francisco. Only two fell short of the high grade of 75 per cent required and these two would doubtless have met any less stringent standard. On the same day, eleven out of fourteen met the requirements for the much more limited art of chiropody. There has never been an examination for admission to the Bar of California, since the present examination system was established, on which anything approaching this proportion of success was reached. It would be a rare examination which even half of the applicants passed. And this is not because the standards for lawyers are higher than those for physicians, or the examinations are more difficult. The exact contrary is the case. If the preliminary training of aspirants to the Bar were uniformly as high as that in medicine, most of the candidates would pass, too. In fact, nearly all of those who have this training do pass. The difference is that there are now no medical schools but Class A schools; they admit none but highly selected university graduates, and they permit only those to remain in medical school who show the necessary ability and diligence. Naturally, the survivors of this process pass the State examinations also, with few or no exceptions. If the law is ever to be in fact what it has always been in name, a 'learned' profession, the same standards of preparation will have to be required of aspirants to it. The question still remains whether the law should be a learned profession. Curiously enough, there are two opinions in this. There is only one as to medicine." (Editorial from San Francisco *Chronicle*, August 29, 1938.

"The California State Supreme Court yesterday frowned again on the Pacific Health Corporation, Inc.'s contention it performed a legal service because its physicians were in independent practice. The court denied, without comment, the health organization's petition for rehearing of a decision which previously condemned its group medical insurance program as a violation of the Medical Practice Act." (Associated Press dispatch, dated San Francisco, September 30, printed in the Los Angeles *Herald-Express*, September 30, 1938.)

"The State Supreme Court, which recently held the activities of the Pacific Health Corporation were in violation of the Medical Practice Act, yesterday granted a stay of judgment to the health insurance firm pending an appeal of the case to the United States Supreme Court." (San Francisco *Examiner*, October 5, 1938.)

"One of the weeklies recently carried an article, in the form of an interview, by a New York physician who says that doctors as a class do not know what they are doing. . . . Well, we read the article and hoped that the doctor—he is Dr. Edward Spencer Cowles—would enlighten us a little on the subject. But he failed to do so. . . . Doctor Cowles attacks the doctors without indicating that he knows much more than other members of his profession, if as much. . . . We do not think that this New York specialist has manifested in his article a good spirit. . . . When a doctor begins to abuse the members of his profession on the score of their

(Continued in Front Advertising Section, Page 23)

† The office addresses of the California State Board of Medical Examiners are printed in the roster on advertising page 6.